

On the Early Love and Pursuit of Wisdom.

A

S E R M O N, &c.



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PREACHED IN
ST. THOMAS'S, SOUTHWARK, JAN. 1, 1793,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
C H A R I T Y - S C H O O L

I N
G R A V E L - L A N E :

By RICHARD JONES.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANAGERS;

A N D

WITH SOME PARTS OF THE SUBJECT WHICH
COULD NOT THEN BE INTRODUCED,
NOW AFFECTIONATELY ADDRESSED TO ALL YOUNG
PERSONS.

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PROVERBS VIII. 17.

*I love them that love me ; and those that seek
me early shall find me.*

THE Bible has all the advantages of admired writings, and in a more abundant measure than any of them. With lofty idea, correct sentiment, pure intention, and salutary tendency, it has more copiousness and variety, more sweetness and majesty than are to be found in any other book. The finest poets, the happiest fabulists, the chastest and sublimest moralists, must all yield to the superior imagination, enchantment, and eloquence, of a prophet's or an apostle's pen : these wrote from the highest source of inspiration, and their productions are transcendently captivating.

B

Personi-

Personification, is one of the boldest and most animating figures in rhetoric: and this, as well as other figures, is introduced in the Scriptures in the most interesting and successful manner. Is the immortal bard of our own nation admired for giving personality to sin and death, in his lost paradise of man? How much more is the Bible to be admired for exhibiting in characters to the last degree vivid and impressive, vice and virtue, wisdom and folly, the various passions of the human mind, and the principles good and bad that govern in real and active life!

The iniquities of men, and the monuments of their iniquities, are made to move and speak before us; a substantiality is given to ideal existence, and a voice to silent and inanimate forms; and faults and excellencies are brought to our view in their respective beauties and deformities, and attended by their natural, certain, concomitant evils and blessings. To the material creation is attributed the sensations and passions of the rational. The heavens and the earth are made parties with the great Jehovah in his appeals to the children of men; and are called upon to attest the righteousness of his providence and the equality of his ways:
and

and seas and rivers are addressed in anger, and threatened with vengeance for the haughtiness of the prince through whose borders they innocently and unconsciously pass; and who vainly calls them his own, without any power to bind their courses or to stay their swellings!

The *prosopopeia* of Wisdom, in this book of Proverbs is exquisitely formed; charmingly imagined, richly embellished, and advantageously applied. It is not the philosopher, or wise man, but wisdom herself that speaks: and let every young man contemplate and admire her form, and be penetrated with her benignity! It is wisdom herself that speaks: the ancient instructress; set up from everlasting, the beginning of God's ways, and older than all his works; whose principles and dictates have been confirmed by the experience of all ages; justified of her children, and justified of her enemies too: wisdom, against whom we can have no prepossession; of whom we can have no jealousy; who has never deceived or betrayed; never falsified her own doctrines and maxims; never triumphed over our lack of wisdom; or mingled pride and arrogance, ill-humour and contempt with her instructions: and who therefore comes to us with the powerful recommendations

datations of authority, perfection, pureness, love, and kind intention, for informing and directing us.

A happy method this! Wisdom herself is introduced: and how introduced? Why, as a magnificent princess, a sovereign queen, an angelic guide, the tender, faithful, effectual guardian of human happiness: the sure convoy to the several temples of virtue, honour, and immortality: who has, and is, all that feeds the hungry, and fills the empty; instructs the simple, reclaims the wanderer, and fixes the wavering soul in the good and everlasting paths of righteousness. Conscious of the dignity and utility of her designs and offers, she makes her solicitations openly, and her proposals audibly; disdaining the guilty whispers and guarded measures by which iniquity seeks to gain admittance, and conciliate compliance; the universality of her invitations bespeaks her the friend of all; and their reiteration and vehemency shew the sincerity and strength of her desire to bless and save us.

“ Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath
“ hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed
“ her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she
“ hath

“ hath also furnished her table : she hath sent
“ forth her maidens ; she crieth upon the high-
“ est places of the city : whoso is simple, let
“ him turn in hither ; as for him that wanteth
“ understanding, she saith unto him, Come, eat
“ of my bread, and drink of the wine which
“ I have mingled : forsake the foolish and live,
“ and go in the way of understanding.”

In allusion to a custom in early times, and hot countries, of feasting in the porticos of palaces, or under tents and canopies raised in the gardens of them (one instance of which is largely described in the book of Esther*) Wisdom is represented as having raised her pillars, stretched out her tent, spread her canopies ; all finished with highest elegance and richest ornament ; with every circumstance

* “ Ahafuerus made a feast unto all the people that
“ were present in the palace, both unto small and great,
“ seven days in the court of the garden of the king’s palace :
“ there were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with
“ cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of
“ marble ; the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red and blue, and white, and black marble ;
“ and they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels
“ being divers one from the other, and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.” Esther
ii. 5, 6, 7.

of

of splendor, as well as with every article of accommodation and use. This interesting and persuasive mode of offering and conveying instruction, has its similitude in the moral writings of the Pagans; one well known and admired example of which I shall subjoin to this discourse.

Wisdom, of the ancient days, the high descent, the celestial origin, the honourable alliances, the transcendent achievements, and unparalleled excellencies which she attributes to herself in this book, does in the text speak to the children of men in the endearing benignity of that heaven from which she comes, and to which she professes to lead: declares love for them, and unbofoms all her honours and treasures to them. "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

Here is a character supposed, and a kind and liberal promise made to that character.

The character supposed is the loving wisdom: the seeking wisdom in the love of it: and the seeking it early: of such wisdom will be found; with a full return of all the love
and

and valuation that can have been entertained for her.

All goes upon a presumption that wisdom is a most desirable acquisition, and especially when made at an early period.

Need I say what the wisdom is that this book of Proverbs seeks to impart? It is the wisdom of moral sentiments and habits; the wisdom of knowing and approving the things that are the most excellent; the wisdom of self-denial, and virtuous profection; this is the wisdom of the Bible, and which makes all other wisdom comparative foolishness.

For her superlative desirableness, wisdom calls herself life, the dearest object of all to us: I am life to them that find me: life, in its very essence, as well as in its coveted appendages and accomplishments. We will take this name for the further contemplation of her incomparable excellence.

Wisdom preserves life from what most endangers it.

It

It restrains the sensual appetites ; or exercises command and dominion over them ; and so keeps from all the mischiefs, miseries, and diseases, that arise from the undue indulgence of them ; and that bring decay and death after them. She is life to them that find her, as being health to all their flesh. Her influence on the mind is as favourable to life as her restraints on corporeal gratifications.

Wisdom calms the mind ; subdues the passions ; checks their impetuosity, and cools their effervescence : disciplines and rectifies the temper : represses ambition ; precludes or stays revenge ; and destroys those works of the flesh, hatreds, variances, emulations, wrath, seditions, strifes ! How often is life made first a torment by these things, and afterwards a sacrifice to them : a gradual sacrifice very often, and in some cases an immediate one ! Men fall by the plagues of their own hearts ; run into excesses and extravagancies of conduct ; excite contests ; engage in quarrels ; their lusts are as hurtful as they are foolish ; and in the end they are drowned in perdition by them. Wisdom preserves from all these things. Hear her companion and her dwelling : I wisdom dwell with prudence ! All that the exactest prudence can
do

do to maintain the sweet tranquillity of life, and to fence it in from threatening inroads, all that I do for my votaries: and they that hate me do so far love death. Wisdom is the parent of that gentleness and goodness, meekness, patience, and temperance, against which there is no law or practice that militates, nor any hand provoked; these things give self-possession, and, under God, keep a man in his own power; which he who wants them seldom is. What dismal tragedies have been acted in the hour of criminal excesses; when young men have erred through wine, or been drunken, though not with wine; carried to lengths they never thought of in the rage of their intemperate and tumultuous spirits! How has the night of their pleasures been turned into fear for all their remaining days! The sun that went down upon their folly, and hid himself from their midnight revels, arises upon their wrath, and the woful effects of their wrath, and finds his earliest beams met with bloodshed and murder! The companion of fools shall be destroyed. By the carnal indulgencies which wisdom forbids, and by the extravagancies of passion which she is not suffered to control, a man becomes evil in all his doings; and a son of Belial that cannot be spoken to: the mind is brought into subjection to the pampered body, and the spirit

shares the inflammation of the over-indulged flesh; whence, wars and fightings, and wounds without cause! They who live in that heat and ferment which the high gratification of sensual appetite in foods and wines creates; who have their spirits raised to a certain pitch, and are ready to answer the first calls that are made upon them in a way of resentment, revenge, or wanton cruelty, such men need to keep a constant watch over themselves; and they should be constantly watched by others; lest, being always in temptation, they fall into destructive snares themselves, or draw those into snares and ruin who are of much greater innocence and worth than themselves. The question, whether friendship can subsist amongst wicked and profligate men, has been often proposed and agitated: however it be determined, this we see, that what is called friendship by them is something of a flimsy nature, and of a precarious continuance; broken by the very libations in which it is pledged and vowed: the love of savage creatures, one moment playing and caressing, and the next, tearing and destroying! Come not into their secret, be not united with them*!

Moreover,

* This sermon, accommodated at a short notice to the occasion on which it is now published, was preached to my
own

Moreover, wisdom is life, as she furnishes with the supports and ornaments of life.

own congregation at Peckham, in the month of June last; two or three days after that very dreadful affair of the Cecil-Street Coffee-House, in the Strand; which was detailed in the public papers, and suitably interested the cause of religion and humanity. Four young gentlemen, three of them natives of Ireland, and one of Scotland, two of them law students of Lincoln's-Inn, spent their evening, or rather night, together at the above-mentioned house. Some circumstances arising which were thought injurious to honour, at a season when none of them were capable of feeling the sentiments of honour, the matter was adjusted, as such matters usually are, by challenge and combat; and after a preceding night of good fellowship and jollity, the head, and entertainer of the company, fell by the hands of one of his guests, about four o'clock in the morning in Hyde-Park! There was a reference in this part of the discourse to that, then recent, event, which made the ears of every one that heard it to tingle. What melancholy things are duels! commenced on the most frivolous occasions, and terminating in the most doleful consequences: the survivor dies as well as the slain; and dies a worse, because a more lingering death: his country fled; his connections broken; his prospects at home ended; in his absence his affairs deranged; his estates and fortunes embezzled and ruined; while in a foreign land, and an unoccupied life, he is left a prey to the bitterness and anguish of poignant and guilty reflection; the voice of a brother's blood crying from the ground; and conscience suggesting the sad confession, I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt!

I have

I have mentioned the length of days that she holds in her right hand ; and in her left hand she has riches and honour for us. With wisdom are connected, industry, œconomy, moderation of desire, and enjoyment ; and every other virtue, that first acquires the good things of this world, and then preserves them to the possessor. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul, but evil pursueth sinners, and the belly of the wicked shall want. What is it that often prevents a fortune, or wastes an inheritance ; clothes a man with rags, and with the nakedness of the flesh, induces that worse nakedness, the being disarrayed of all respect and honour ; severed from all attachment and love ; left unprotected, and unnoticed ; and made the objects of indifference, aversion, and derision ! It is the want of wisdom : that worst of ignorance, the not knowing, nor choosing to know, where our true interest and consideration lies ; and the following sinners in those paths, which like the heath of the wilderness, see no good come to them. What the wise and virtuous do, is declared to prosper : the ungodly are not so.

There is a further reason why wisdom may be termed life ; it improves the natural life of
man ;

man; and communicates a divine excellence to it.

We read of a divine nature, that we may be partakers of while in human flesh: of an assimilation to deity: of Christ formed, and God himself dwelling in us. These are wonderful expressions! It seems a man may so live as if he had a deity within him; forming his temper, directing his habits and practices; and dignifying his life; so that all belonging to him should seem done by the inspiration of the Almighty within him! Whence all this elevation, this being one with God himself? It is all brought about by the restraints, and laws, and counsels of wisdom: the being separate from a profane world, and escaping the pollutions that are in it through lusts. Wisdom, or religion, gives a portion of God's glory and blessedness to man: adorns him with a flower of the Creator's crown; and, in a manner, sets him above the world he lives in. Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world!

Wisdom, so essential and valuable a blessing, as to be exhibited to us under the name of life, is represented as especially valuable and desirable in early life.

At

At an early period all wisdom is of special and peculiar value. This is universally acknowledged. The places that have been consecrated to this use, the giving to the young man knowledge and discretion, have in all times had a celebrity above other places. Egypt, comes down to us with the everlasting encomium of the scriptures. Athens, was the boast of Greece herself, superior in fame as she was to the rest of the earth. Of that city it was said, that though the bodies of the Grecians were dispersed through all other cities, their souls had taken up their residence within the Athenian walls*. Rome, has a better immortality from her philosophers than from her warriors: and those places in our land, where through desire men separate themselves, and seek and intermeddle with all wisdom, shine in the general estimation above a trading or a manufacturing city: their professed design arrays them in magnificence, and decks them with ornament; and we honour them for their intention, as well as their work's sake.

* Una urbs attica pluribus annis eloquentia, quam universa Grecia, uberiusque floruit; adeo ut corpora gentis illius separata sint in alias civitates, ingenia vero solis Athenensium muris clausa existimes. Vell. Pat. I. 18.

And

And if all wisdom be so desirable in early life as to give distinguished lustre to the places where it is, and has been, in an especial manner dispensed, how much more desirable at that season is religious wisdom, which has the will of God for its rule, and immortal happiness for its end? This wisdom confers beauty on the character; imparts comfort to the mind; and is of best service to the world. I will take up each of these articles for further consideration.

I. Early wisdom creates and confers the very greatest beauty of character.

Righteousness is a crown of glory to the hoary head, and a diadem of beauty on the young man's brow. The natural gracefulness of youth gives advantage to every good quality; and makes virtue itself shine brighter: and the brightness does not only continue, but increase, through future and succeeding years. True goodness, carried into the world at the first entrance upon its active and busy scenes, and not only maintained, but improved, by the events and changes, the temptations and snares of the world, is to the last degree lovely and captivating. The uniform dominion of reason over the sensual passions; the trials and the triumphs

triumphs of uprightness, and benevolence, over the fordid and selfish principle; the preferring others in honour and interest to themselves, in the hour of virtuous competition and struggle; and the refusing to go beyond the commandment of God for silver and gold; these things, with their special circumstances, apt gradations and growing improvements during a continued intercourse with the world, will be admired and blessed; and the longer such a person lives, the more bright his day, the more perfect his path.

Compare with this the wisdom that is adopted as the last refuge in a forlorn and vitious old age! This is not the ripe fruit that my soul desireth; the fruit of genuineness and size, of colour, fulness, and flavour; this is not the good tree, bringing forth that which is good; growing from, and nourished by a proper and corresponding root, but rather the appearance of grapes stuck upon a thorn-bush, or figs fastened to a thistle: here you have not the animated and glowing figure; the whole body, fitly compacted together, by that which every joint supplieth; but an imperfect and defective form; made up of discordant materials; without cement, or congruity, or any common
source

source of supply and nutriment. We read of a dead faith, and dead works; such is faith professed, and works performed, in the evening of a mis-spent and wretched life; langour will always accompany and mark them. There is a time and season to every purpose and work under the sun; and time and season, air, and influence of heaven, are not more necessary to mature the fruits of the earth, than a suitable course of conscience and duty is necessary to mature our virtues. We bring forth fruit with patience: not through a sudden change, but by care, experience, and holy discipline. Would you have the beauty, as well as the sincerity of religion, begin in it betimes. The efforts of a veteran offender at virtue, and his faint and imperfect semblances of it, have excited pleasure if not disgust; and in some cases, his very good has been evil spoken of. Who is he that goeth up to the temple at the hour of prayer, that aged person, so exact and constant at the third and at the ninth hour? It is an old disciple, faithful to the last! No, it is the young beginner in religion; as you would soon discover by his vague theories; his defective services; his crude and clumsy imitations; his pitiful compensations and substitutions: it is the unfaithful servant; afraid of his master, and of

D

his

his approaching account; scared at the grim visage of death, which his glass shews him in his own visage; and seeking by a few heartless formalities to make up for a long want of understanding and goodness. But he gives alms at the gate of the temple! Yes, of such things as he has: but it is the day of small things: the estate is gone; the fortune is left upon the gamester's table; melted in the harlots houses; or wasted with riotous living: and now with the scantlings that are barely sufficient to supply and warm himself, he is for protecting and cheering others. The temple, and the beggar at its gate, have no boon that would once have been accepted elsewhere. Even wisdom when ingrafted upon folly, makes but an uncouth and awkward appearance: it is the piece of new cloth put into the old garment, bringing the rent to remembrance, though by no means making it worse. But a beauty rests upon an even, unbroken character, and a blessing follows it; "blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his raiment!" Heaven exhibits such men with an air of exultation and complacency; "these are they that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy."

II. Early

II. Early wisdom is the source of comfort and enjoyment, throughout all future life.

The very best happiness is from within. The well of water that most refreshes us is there. Wisdom creates the only heaven that we can have upon earth. That discharges the mind of every troublesome guest: banishes fear, precludes remorse, delivers from ravenous avarice, disquieting ambition, and gnawing envy; allows no blush of shame, saves from self-upbraidings, those worst upbraidings of all; and introduces in the room of these things, courage, and self-approbation; contentment, humility, love, presence of mind, tranquillity, and security. The good man is satisfied from himself; and has no occasion to go further than himself, or to fly himself, in order to be happy.

Early wisdom is a source of enjoyment through after life, as it occupies, and fills the mind; and replenishes it with its own greatness. It suggests high and noble thoughts; engages in great and good designs; furnishes the best employment; and creates an inexhaustible source of energy and vigour. How desirable, to have no disconsolate void, and of course, no self-weariness, or self-loathing! This is the happy
state

state with the early votary of wisdom. He has no vacuity to depress him; meets with no spectre to affright him. Wisdom makes the house clean; and by her hand, it is not only swept, but garnished; and becomes a very chamber of imagery, in which he may walk and contemplate, with great, successive, and ever varying delights. How full is the blessedness of solid and just thoughts; correct sentiments; useful, or ornamental knowledge; the embellishments of a cultivated genius, and of a disciplined spirit! All is delightful in an employed, and an improved mind; and the possessor feels his happiness in the furniture and pursuits of it. How different is it with the child of vice and folly! He is empty of all solid good; and for want of good company, the worst enters: *the seven devils enter in, and dwell there*: vain imaginations, excessive, but misplaced, and unworthy affections; absurd appetitions and desires; violent, though mean resentments; the jealousies of ignorance or of guilt; and the revengeful workings of an illiberal and a turbulent heart: himself his worst enemy, and time his heaviest burthen: employed, or rather, consumed, amongst the wretchedest characters about him, or in cruel hostilities with the creatures, injuriously, considered.

sidered as beneath him : consumed in cruel hostilities with them, or in pitiful victories over them : in irritating their passions ; watching their contests ; applying to their predilections, or antipathies ; triumphing over their weakness, or betraying their confidence ; magnifying himself by their strength, or speed ; for his covetousness, or wantonness, put to unsuitable and dishonourable trials ; till the time that his weariness redeems from chasing or tormenting the brutes, is spent in making himself one ; by excesses, which leaving him only the shape of man, makes that very shape his further reproach : the village alehouse, or the city tavern, the scene of his nocturnal and noisy triumphs over generosity, mercy, and humanity ; over the patience and property of others, and perhaps over some things that were once good in himself ! How many young men have I known, of fortune, and of family, through self-neglect, and obstinate refusal of wisdom, greater burthens to themselves than to those around them ; (and their lot has been bad enough) because though others could run from them, they could not run from themselves ; their common and general associates, those who submitted to take their company, and their money together. What could such people do, if they had not the

the defenceless part of the creation to worry and to destroy*!

Early

* “ Poor is the triumph o’er the timid hare :” so said Thompson, that child and poet of nature. Alike poor is the triumph o’er the chased roe, and the hind let loose; enlarged to be destroyed. The character of a sportsman has always appeared to me, a most unamiable and censurable character; as made up of insidiousness, violence, and cruelty. The principle of self-preservation, which is common to all creatures, shews itself in those which are the objects of attention to the heroes of the field, in very wonderful habits and exemplifications of presentiment, caution, and management. Man, possessed of the same principle (though in the use of it, neither so uniform nor successful for his own safety) has by observation and attention enabled himself to preclude or defeat the exertions of it in them: to prevent their pre-apprehension, nullify their caution, and counteract their management. His methods of deceiving, ensnaring, and circumventing them, are in many instances humiliating indeed: he croucheth and humbleth himself that he may draw them into his net; and magnifies himself by his successes, though by expedients dishonourable to his nature; but his idleness must be relieved some way, and his mischievous passions have vent somewhere. To follow affrighted and defenceless creatures with their hideous and unnatural whoopings and yellings; to drive them in their desperation and extremity into the holes and caves of the rock, or the ocean which they instinctively dread to get rid of their more raging and boisterous pursuers, is reckoned high and capital enjoyment: but to *be in at the death*, that is, to be witnesses to the innocent creatures last agonies and terrors, that is felicity

Early wisdom is moreover a source of comfort throughout the longest life, as it precludes all those sad retrospects, which late converts do and must experience.

Wisdom

city and honour indeed ; the sum total of all skill and speed, prowess, and privileged good fortune ; the glory of the squire, the parson, and the peer ; whose names, and fames, in such a connection are trumpeted through the world in the common vehicles of important intelligence. *A fine sporting country*, shall be made the determining circumstance in the choice of habitation ; and *a cure of souls*, shall be more eligible for this appendage, than for the souls themselves ; their number, docility, or capacity for spiritual instruction !

The leaping of walls, the running against each other, or against time, till their legs are broken, or their heart-strings snap asunder ; the instances of which we are informed of, and wounded by, in the public prints, confirm what I say of unsuitable and dishonourable trials : and of the betrayal of confidence, I lately had one tale authenticated to me, which, improper as it was for the dignity and gravity of the pulpit, may I hope be pardonably detailed from the press.

A young man of wealth, by usual courtesy denominated an Esquire, had tamed and domesticated a fox. With the capriciousness that belongs to such young men, whose tender mercies generally dwell next door to cruelty, he one day took it into his head that he would divert himself and his associates by hunting it ; and accordingly turned it out before his hounds. It was in vain. They had long lived together ; Reynard would not run, nor the canine species
worry

Wisdom comes not at a late period but with some degree of pain. It is the sudden effulgence of that light which shews a man the horrors and dangers of the darkness he has so long dwelt in; and as it has happened that persons have even died with terror at discovering by the dawn of day the precipice they in the night walked by the edge of; so has a late entrance of wisdom occasioned a perturbation and horror of mind. A man startles at the sight of his

worry or irritate. To remove this grievous balk in the pastime of the day, the vile noises and vociferations which are bellowed on these occasions, were adopted, to excite that fear on one side, and that vehemence on the other, which neither of the creatures were disposed to manifest. They continued to view each other with a friendly eye. It seems the antipathies that we call natural, may be precluded, or subdued; and that no inveteracies but those of vice, are incurable. What is now to be done? The fox, from the fear of man, and the strife of tongues, had by some auxiliary circumstances, gained the thatch of a barn: in conscious security above, he placidly surveyed his foes below. What was to be done to provoke the wished-for chace? It was suggested to the master, that could he get within the spring of his confidential animal, that animal would commit itself to him. This Judas Iscariot pursued the hint. He climbed near to his once fondled fox, who immediately threw himself into his bosom. He had found an asylum, and a deliverer! The master threw him down upon the pack below; the suddenness, and the violence of the throw excited fury, and the deceived fox was torn instantly to pieces.

chains,

chains, though they are broken; and with consciousness of present safety, is deeply affected with the hazards he has ran, and the ruin that he has made his hair-breadth escape from; and fearfulness and trembling take hold of him; he sees his past life to have been a continued course of inanity, and folly, of delusion, disorder, and danger; and his path to have been all but desperate and ruinous; he finds himself saved by a sort of friendly violence, both from, and against himself; some friend or angel laying hold on him, because merciful unto him; he is saved with fear to himself, and not without it, to those who ventured so near him as to pluck him out of the fire; and all his disquieting sensations and reflections are accompanied with a self contempt and reformation: "thou makest mine own clothes to abhor me!" Not so the earlier lover and disciple of wisdom: he has no melancholy and mortifying retrospects; he has calmness of reflection, as well as brightness of prospect.

III. Early wisdom is of greatest service to the world.

Wisdom is of little comparative avail, when the best occasions and the properest seasons for

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using

using it are over. What great benefit accrues to the world, from an old sinner seeing and lamenting his iniquities? For any thing that the world, or the benefit of the world, has to do with him, we may take up the indignant permission, "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still!" Are a man's bones filled with the sins of his youth, let him lie down in the dust with them; and be confided to the tender mercies of a long-suffering and forgiving God! How do I know that any man is sincere in a late change of life and manners? What signifies a distaste to the libertine world, when the stomach is incapable of its luxuries, and the head of its tumults and revellings, and when the limbs can no longer carry to its shows and its excesses: when the debilitated body can no longer endure the loads which it once good humouredly suffered to be laid upon it, and carried as far, and as long as it was able to do; and when those days are come, in which none but the wise and virtuous find pleasure!

But giving to the old repentant what credit you will for the sincerity of his compunctions and confessions, what is their great utility, and where their extensive use? Late converts to
God

God and virtue, add to the general stock of happiness but feebly and slenderly. The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and these make nothing perfect. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; nor can the chafms of a long mis-spent life, be filled up by untimed, though vehement exertions in the dregs of it. The ground is as stoney as a long blinded, perverted, judgment, and a long petrified, and feared conscience can make it; and a few handfuls of adventitious, superadded earth, bringeth fruit that dureth but for a while. What are the wiser thoughts of the eleventh hour, to the real service of him that hath wrought all day in the vineyard? The time cometh when no man can work. Late wisdom can do but little good; and it cannot undo former harm. The parent's heart has many years been broken: a father's sorrows lie deep and silent in the dust with him; and the fountain of a mother's tears has long ceased to flow! The vexed, betrayed, injured, friend, is removed out of the way of any submissions or remunerations that it might be wished he should receive; and the several victims of the reclaimed profligate's cruelty or lust are scattered in all lands; or are no longer to be sought in this land of the living. One sinner worketh much evil; more than he

thinketh of ; or than his late reformatiōns can do away, or compensate for.

By the interesting consideration of service and utility to the world, as well as from a regard to your own amiableness of character, and comfort of heart, young men, seek wisdom ! and walk in her dignified and consecrated paths. The world looks for virtuous wisdom in you. It is necessary to the concerns and businesses of the world. Knowledge and rectitude, honour and conscience, cleanness of hands, and pureness of principle, are the bands by which civil society is held together : these things constitute the life and soul, the vigour and felicity of the general community of the earth ; and the several subdivisions of that vast community find themselves to be honoured and blessed, as these things pervade and influence them. By the blessing of the upright the city is established : all is compact, secure, and flourishing : but it is overthrown by the breath of the wicked. Ignorance, artifice, self-love, and self-seeking, extravagant passions, base affections, a want of integrity, simplicity, and benevolence, sinister ends, and a disingenuous mind, do so far as they spread, strike at the root of all social security and enjoyment ; a man becomes a traitor
to

to his own stock and race by them ; and more deserving men find their happiness undermined, their confidence betrayed, their substance injured, and their prospects destroyed by them. Men have a claim upon one another for virtuous conduct. The season of youth is no sooner passed, but an active part is to be taken in the world ; and all those good qualities that the safety and peace of the world depend upon, are to be brought forth into act and exercise ; they are wanted soon, and must therefore be studied soon ; miss not your seed time ; nor cast your harvest into the depth of winter. Be familiar and expert betimes in all the amiable and excellent arts and habits of holy and honourable living. Your integrity is wanted on the exchange ; your wisdom in the senate ; your eloquence at the bar ; your learning in the church ; your skill and industry, for the salvation of the state : begin life with these objects in view, and reap the plenteous increase of your wise thoughts, and virtuous assiduities !

Let parents see the reward of their attentions, the happy issue of their cares, the rich fruits of their expence, the accomplishment of their wishes, the fulfilment of their just expectations ! You were reared to maturity and vigour by
their

their constant anxieties, and occasional hardships; by their wearisome days, and sleepless nights: by their strength made your own, you crept through the weaknesses of infant existence: by their vigilance you were kept from falling in the first and feeble essays of your own strength: and were furnished by their affection with a ready and suitable sustenance as the calls of nature and appetite demanded: were you before them, you were their joy; were you from under their eye, they sought you forrowing: from your childhood to your youth up, they only exchanged one care for another on your account: give them the satisfaction of believing that their virtues and usefulness will live in you, and they will hardly consider their own deaths as a final and absolute departure! Let the world have its just claims upon you; and above all, be faithful to yourselves! Be ambitious of that best of lives, the living in other men's esteem and honour: this is the best life, and the most durable: it shall be told to the generation following, and that shall call you blessed. You may depend upon it that your memories will be embalmed, if you do but prepare the spices!

Wisdom,

Wisdom, and that in early life, is as attainable, as we have seen it to be desirable. The text, as I before said, supposes a valuable character, and makes a liberal promise to it. The promise arises out of the character; and the character ensures the promise: I will therefore blend them together in the particulars that follow.

I. Wisdom will be found of us because
"sought."

He that seeketh findeth. It is so in the common affairs of life. Great things are brought about by strong and assiduous application; and if this be the case in common things, where no great declarations are made of divine influence and heavenly co-operation, much more may we suppose it to be so in things of higher importance and use: and we have manifold asseverations on the matter. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth them not, and it shall be given him." A dispensation of religion prior to that which is called the dispensation of the spirit and of life, has similar promises, and they equally express. "Then shall they know if they follow on to know

know the Lord." And again, "What man is he that feareth the Lord, him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose: he shall make him to understand justice and judgment, yea, and every good path." The Father of lights, will give us of his light. That Jesus who is the light of the world, will by his gospel still enlighten every man that cometh into the world. He who attributed the inefficacy of his light, to the darkness, the thick darkness, of the hearts into which it was no sooner poured than it was absorbed, will not withhold the communication of it to susceptible and congenial minds, in which it shall find ray for ray; nor will he who laid the blindness of the Jews to their not coming to him for knowledge, be wanting in the dispensation of it to any that betake themselves to him for obtaining it.

II. The "love" of wisdom, under which we seek it, is a further security for our finding it: and that for two reasons: the search will be more cordial on our part, and more acceptable on God's part.

It will be more ardent and cordial on our side: and therefore more successful.

How

How prosperous are men in the pursuits that they set their hearts upon! Strong desire is nerve and wing: nerve to our exertions, and wing to our spirits, in their attempted soarings to determined and favourite objects. And so will it be in our aspirations after wisdom and virtue. We shall approve ourselves; shall feel our own enlargement; holy affections, high and devotional habits, will lift us above the common level; we shall perceive our ascent to higher things than others propose to themselves; and thus pressing towards the mark, shall obtain the prize of our high calling.

And as we shall seek wisdom more cordially, when we seek it in the love of it, so more acceptably to God, and therefore more successfully to ourselves.

God is pleased with this spirit of goodness, and will both assist, and reward it. Wisdom speaks in his name, and engages for him; I love them that love me. Jesus loved the young man that kneeled before him inquiring the way to eternal life: and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will love every young person that comes to him with petition and passion for holy instruction and virtuous happiness. This

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sincere

sincere and prevailing love of goodness, is that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, which is classed with the very greatest blessings; and they that have it shall be filled: they shall have all the wisdom and goodness that their enlightened minds covet; and shall be abundantly happy in their own excellent dispositions and affections now, and in the sure reward of them hereafter. The love of wisdom satisfies and pleases in proportion to the degree in which it is intense and vehement; and is certain of being fully and happily gratified: God meets them that remember him in their way; and that rejoice in the desire and the work of righteousness.

III. The "early," as well as the empas-
sioned search of wisdom, ensures the finding it.

Youth is the time for all vigorous and successful exertions, and therefore for this: the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, and improving habits of both. Then it is that an ardour pervades the soul that carries this sacred passion, the love of wisdom, above all opposing and threatening difficulties. Indifference, timidity, and languor, belong not to this season: what youth affects, it affects with energy: and where
wisdom

wisdom is the mark, it will assuredly be reached: its words will be found and eaten, and be joy and rejoicing to the heart. To see an extensive field for wisdom to act in; to take in an ample survey the noble and numerous exemplifications that may be made of it, and to have a due apprehension of its rewards, in a long life of tranquillity, eminence, and honour, this creates and strengthens that virtuous ambition which subdues all things to itself. Resolution, in common cases does great matters: virtuous resolution does still greater, and the resolution of intelligent and well-disposed youth, does all that they desire: and especially that best of all things, the obtainment of the wisdom that perfects for this world, and leads to another and a happier.

They that "seek" me, in the "love" of me, and seek me "early" shall find me.

You perceive that wisdom must be "sought," before it is possessed: it is one of those good things that we cannot have without our own exertions and labours: it is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh: nor of the will of man: it does not come by ancestry, nor inheritance: by carnal indulgencies, nor passionate wishes;

wishes ; nor is it so entirely of God, as to preclude the necessity of our being workers together with him : in this matter we vainly look for inspiration : God does not make us wise against our own wills, or in the absence of our own endeavours ; and men cannot : promotion may come from the north, or the south ; any wind of heaven may blow it unto us : fortune or title, place or pension, may come by chance or accident, while we are journeying, or sleeping, while we are vainly, or wickedly employed ; but to be learned, or virtuous, we must submit to literary and religious discipline ; and must accustom ourselves to reflection, self-denial, and self-government : and this makes wisdom a most valuable possession indeed ; I mean, its arguing qualities of distinguished excellence in the possessor. Wisdom must be sought : and to such seeking is the promise made. If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures : then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God !

But where dwelleth wisdom, and where is the place of understanding ? Whither is our
early

early and cordial search to be directed, within what lines are we to walk for meeting her, and by what marks to be guided to her dwelling? It is not the path that the vulture's eye hath not seen, and which no fowl knoweth, that leads to her: she makes not darkness her secret place; nor is her way hid from all living. Truth conceals not herself in the profound abyss; nor need we say who shall ascend up into heaven, or descend into the deep, to bring Christ down from above, or up again from the dead? Were the maxims and lessons of wisdom abstruse and recondite, and like gold from the mine, to be come at no other way than by painful research, and laborious investigation, we might cease to wonder that few there be that find them: but what faith an infallible oracle? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach. Wherefore,

Seek wisdom, "in the Bible;" that primary source of all that is wise and good, great and excellent: by this shall a young man cleanse his way. If it be true that the Lord giveth wisdom, and that out of his mouth cometh understanding, then seek wisdom from that revelation by which he speaks to us. The Bible both records,

records, and makes, good and great characters: heroes as well as saints: not merely amiable, or useful, but wonderful men. No annals ever produced such a line of exalted worthies as this book has done: and these transcendent characters became what they were by the very principles which it inculcates. Age after age has proved the solidity of its maxims, the safety of its counsels, the excellency of its spirit, the truth of its promises, the reasonableness of its discipline, the value of all its objects and ends: heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word shall never lose one jot or tittle of its sovereign value, efficacy, and utility. "Thy statutes have been my counsellors!" "I know more than the ancients because I keep thy commandments!" I may repent of committing myself to other directors, but "I shall not be ashamed when I have a respect to all thy judgments!" The practical wisdom of ages and nations is collected into this volume, and exhibited, and improved upon in it.

From the ingrafted word, that is declared "able to save the soul," seek to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The book that comprehends both the law of God, and the institutes of Jesus, is no unweildy or cumbersome book ;
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its precepts are not so numerous but thy memory may hold them, and the fleshly table of thy heart contain them: thou mayest carry it from the closet to the parlour, nor can the most casual glance be void of some use, and information to thee: its commandments are a lamp, and its laws are light, and its reproofs are instruction: thou mayest consult it by the way, as well as in the house; and from thy chair mayest convey it to thy pillow; and when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee; it shall tell thee what proportion this life bears to another; how thou mayest escape temptations, and overcome afflictions; live virtuously, and die happily; meet death, and at last have an inheritance of glory among the wise! Revealed religion is the true light from heaven: it shines full upon thee, and will infallibly lead thee thither! Art thou ignorant? Be it to thyself that thou art so; for the fountain of instruction is near thee. Art thou in doubt? Thou hast the Son of God to resolve thee, what thou shalt do to inherit eternal life: thou hast his promise to ascertain it: his directions to point the road; his example to inspire thee; the energy of his gospel to help thee. Think highly of the advantage of divine revelation
for

for the pursuit and acquirement of wisdom ; and have a due sense of the infelicity and guilt of letting those advantages slip, unimproved, and undiscerned. What measure of tears will be sufficient to lament our own unhappiness, what self-upbraidings will be equal to our folly ; what punishment can exceed our evil desert, if any of the poor Heathens who have sedulously gleaned up their religious principles from different quarters, and distant regions, and formed them into a regular and uniform system by their own application and genius, should at last be found more complete in goodness than we, who have enjoyed the clear and perfect institution of the Son of God : and if we behold them partakers of a blessed immortality, who could know nothing about immortality but what they collected from men as dark and bewildered as themselves, we should find ourselves excluded from the possession of it ; we, who have it fully revealed, and expressly proposed to us as the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus ! We have no less a person than the Lord Jesus to instruct us in the happy art of living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; and shall we be left behind by those who had only the morals of Seneca or Epictetus to form themselves upon, and every spark of light to
strike

strike out, before they could have it to guide themselves by! Seek wisdom, the best of wisdom from the Bible; every leaf contains it: I add, seek wisdom also in, and from "living characters."

The principles and rules of wisdom as they are laid down in the Bible are excellent and lovely; as exemplified in living characters, they have an attractive and irresistible charm. The former, are the true lines, the latter, the finished figure. We see integrity and truth, self-denial, and benevolence, with every other human and divine virtue to the very greatest advantage, when we see them in the lives of those excellent persons who are governed by them, make sacrifices to them, and are made great and happy by them. Paul uses the remarkable expression, of our "adorning the doctrine of Jesus Christ:" and gives it in charge to us to do so. Beautiful as the doctrine of Christ is as it lies in the New Testament, it seems, we may cast an additional beauty upon it, by the due exemplifications of it in our own lives and actions; and that real life is more than the completest system. Here, then, in real life, let young men seek wisdom; let them contemplate the grave and sober, the even and uniform, the respected and respectable

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characters

characters of wise and just and useful men: mark the perfect, and behold the upright, till they are changed into the same image. These are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth: and, as some have justly observed, "it is a great instance of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, that notwithstanding the multitudes that die every day, there should always be numerous examples of elder and more experienced persons left in the world in every age, to instruct and guide the rising generation in it, and to train young persons up to usefulness and happiness, by their counsels and cautions, directions and examples: otherwise, the experience of one generation would be lost to another; and every age must begin afresh upon its own flock; which must needs be to great disadvantage." Days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom.

In order to their making that animated and early search after wisdom that ensures the finding of it, let all young persons be aware that they will certainly need wisdom; and that they may not be retarded or frustrated in their pursuit of it, let them avoid those vain persons who neglect and refuse it.

Let

Let all young men be aware that they will want wisdom.

It is the principal thing: the one thing needful: have what you will besides, yet if this one thing thou lackest, thou art poor and incomplete indeed! Solomon long since said, that wisdom is good with an inheritance: and I will add that an inheritance is good with wisdom; and good for little without it; for what inheritance can supply the want of sense and virtue; or shield its owner's head from the many dangers and mischiefs of untutored ignorance, and unbridled profaneness? There are undisciplined and irreligious persons who have this world's goods to the full, but could we ask them, are you happy; is all within complete and satisfactory to you; they would answer in the negative. And yet this incomplete happiness is all that multitudes rest in: and all that they provide for those that come after them: their only care is that their children may be rich enough; and they imagine that little time, and little pains will make them wise and good enough. But how sad is the contrast between fullness and splendour without, and emptiness and deformity within! between the well-furnished house and the ill-furnished mind! ceil with cedar, and paint with vermilion,
but

but if all is great and shining but yourselves, ye are but the potsherd covered with silver dross; the baseness of the clay will appear through the external gilding, and subject you to reproach and derision. It is a false lustre in which many shine: dazzling for the moment, but not commanding any lasting admiration and respect. There must be the inner man of the heart, to give weight and significance to outer appearance. We must be all glorious within, or the glory that is without, will fade as it is looked upon. Man that is in honour, but understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish! How disgusting is it to see people rich, but ignorant; gaily attired but of coarse speech, and awkward manners: possessing all things, without becoming any thing! Come to me, says celestial wisdom, for those ornaments and treasures which as yet do not belong to thee: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that no nakedness or shame may appear!" Wisdom is the aggrandizing, the enriching, the transmuting quality; the truest and divinest "transfiguration;" the fashion of the countenance is altered by it: the intelligent and virtuous soul shines through the fleshly covering, and makes the raiment white and glistering!

With

With a persuasion of the necessity of wisdom, avoid those vain persons who neglect or refuse it.

Evil communications corrupt good manners : and be not deceived, as if this was not its general influence, or would not be its influence upon you.

Avoid familiarity with the vices of wicked men ; and with the men themselves : for here, familiarity does not beget contempt, but too often conformity and liking.

By familiarity with the vices of men, I mean the making ourselves frequent witnesses of them ; the viewing them, or having them brought into our view : and this young persons cannot do with safety.

The power of habit and association is amazing : by this antipathies vanish ; prejudices are overcome ; and even complacencies succeed in their stead. “ The monsters of Africa are not terrible to their keepers : ” accustomedness destroys all horror and fear : and in like manner, accustomedness to the sight and hearing of wicked men’s extravagancies and enormities of conduct, destroys all the surprise and pain, that
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the innocent soul was at first shaken with : from being dreadful they become supportable ; we are first reconciled, and next inclined to them. How lovely a sight is an uncorrupted young man, while as yet unacquainted with the wicked, in the house of his father, or in the sequestered walks of innocence, virtue, and science ! Bring him into the world, and make him a spectator of the characters upon it, and in many cases, how soon does a difference appear ! Communication and intercourse, without criminal solicitation, or treacherous design, is a dangerous, and oftentimes, a ruinous thing. As denoting no more than meer converse, evil communication, leads to evil habits and manners, by faster steps than we imagine : the talk of the lips tendeth to other things, as well as poverty : and perhaps in the low and wretched classes of mankind, many become prepared for the dismal and atrocious deeds which they commit, by the tremendous language they ordinarily use ; and the infernal execrations and threatenings in which they wantonly indulge themselves. Can no restraint be laid upon the tongue set on fire of hell ; and setting on fire the course of nature ? We have endeavoured to check, or chastise, the speeches that outrage civil government : why not prevent, or punish, those that outrage religion and decency ;

decency ; and prepare for all rebellions against the sovereign of the universe : thus carrying it equally towards Cæsar and towards God ?

Keep guilty objects out of sight, and guilty courses out of common converse : by often taking these things upon the tongue we may come to roll them as a sweet morsel under it ; nor can we expect to be much in an impure region without drawing in its pestilential air. Lessen not the real and unchangeable hideousness of vice by any chosen approaches to it, or near contemplation of it ; keep your distance, and your terrors ; as that will always keep its deformity and malignity.

Oh, let all such as are yet sound and unpoluted, shut their eyes and stop their ears, from sight and report of other men's wickedness ! Sight often indulged, and report listened to, will destroy those virtuous timidities, and all that indignation and anguish, at the commission of flagrant offences which the untainted mind possesses ; and which are the first fences of its religion and peace : by the beholding of transgressors, we may become less grieved for them, or surprised at them ; and more readily influenced, and easily drawn after them.

Avoid

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Avoid

Avoid familiarity with wicked men, as well as forbear the making their vices familiar to your view, or the matter of your discourse.

Society has much good in it, and we are unwilling to admit that it can have any evil in it: but we know its assimilating nature, and all-subduing power. We have affecting instances of the absorbent quality of evil company, and evil example, especially. The good have often bowed before the evil, and the righteous at the gate of the wicked. Wickedness does indeed seem too hideous to be influential or powerful; but, as in the dream of the Egyptian monarch, the lean-fleshed, and ill-favoured kine, have eat up the well-favoured, and fat-fleshed; and the ears of corn thin and blasted, have devoured the ears rank and good! Behold the many fair plants of righteousness that are destroyed by the breath of the wicked!

And as a most powerful assimilator, so vice is the worst leveller we can fear: in its republic all are equal: the common principle of fraternity destroying all differences of young and old, rich and poor, base and honourable: they are not ashamed to call brethren. As then you value the common distinctions of the world, and
would

would preserve the superiority, that wealth, honour, and family give, refrain from wicked men.

“ Their thoughts, says the prophet, are thoughts of iniquity, and their works are works of iniquity: the act of violence is in their hands, and their feet run to evil: wasting and destruction are in their paths, and there is no judgment in their goings: their fingers are defiled with iniquity, as well as their hands with blood; their lips have spoken lies, and their tongue muttered perverseness: they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.” With what dreadful emphasis, and amplitude, are wicked men here described! The evil leaven pervades the whole lump; and insinuates itself into every particle of which they are composed: to every limb, and joint, is assigned its special, dreadful, operation and province: they travail with one comprehensive, destructive, curse; and lips, hands, feet, and fingers, are all ready to execute the several contents of it, among unsuspecting and incautious mortals! Not only the pursuit of wisdom, but the preserving of common safety, requires an entire and everlasting disunion from such men. The libertine world cannot be known but abhorred; nor imitated but with calamity:

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its communion cannot be kept but with disgrace; nor renounced but with some farewell mischiefs. "They hatch the cockatrice eggs: he that eateth of their eggs dieth; and that which is crushed breaketh forth into a viper."

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise. Ye that are beginning in life, begin under their counsels, as under their eye, and in their company.

Love the wisdom that will return your love. Say unto wisdom, thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman; this love of virtue will make you like Jesus Christ, when he uttered that divine sentiment, "He that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother!" Love wisdom early, and keep your first love. Give her your might, and the beginning of your strength; your excellency of dignity, and of power. The love of wisdom cherished at that period when all our commendable affections and exertions appear in their highest influence and happiest attainments, will ensure to you stability, ornament, usefulness, and comfort, throughout the longest life: you will satisfy others, and be satisfied

satisfied from yourselves in all seasons: the best families will be open to you; and the relationships and connections which are the sources of honour, wealth, and felicity, will meet or invite you: in old age you will renew your strength; living upon the pleasant remembrance of well spent days: and when you come to die, instead of dismaying prospects, or the hovering hope and cold consolation of unformed, or half formed notions; and of various, uneven, methods of conduct, dictated, adopted, and changed, as prudential considerations suggested or required; and of taking the word of a spiritual guide for it, that you are safe, against the surmises and fears of your own hearts; you will have the witness in yourselves: you will have those supports which have been the supports of all righteous men; and will go hence knowing in whom you have believed; and persuaded that God will approve what you have done. You will anticipate the plaudit of the worthy and eternal Judge, and the music of his appellation, "good and faithful servant," will dwell upon your ears for ever!

To convey the wisdom of the Bible, the spirit of religion, and protestantism, is the object and end

end of that school for the benefit of which we are now met together: its design is to form worthy and useful characters in inferior stations.

The foundation of it was laid in the year 1687, in the reign of King James the Second; when a school was set up by one Poulton, a Jesuit; and public notice was given, that he would instruct the children of the poor without any expence to their parents. This school was opened to counteract the dangerous consequences of that popish school: Mr. Arthur Shallet, Mr. Samuel Warburton, and Mr. Ferdinando Holland, were its first institutors and patrons.

The number of scholars was at first forty; afterwards increased to fifty; and now to one hundred and eighty. The boys are taught to read, write, and cipher; and the girls are prepared by suitable qualifications, for the stations and offices of industry.

It is situated in one of the poorest parts of London; and children are received into it without distinction of parties; the common good only being intended. The children of indigent watermen,

men, and fishermen, have especially experienced its advantages.

The charges have been defrayed by the gifts and subscriptions of private persons; and the kind remembrance of some in their last wills. There is also an annual collection at this place.

The sight of the children, more forcibly engages the continuance of your liberality than any arguments that I can use. I leave you, as they rise before you, to the powerful eloquence of their simplicity and necessity; and know how little I need to do to provoke you to love and the repetition of your good works.

Shepherd of Israel, gather these lambs of the flock! lay them in thy bosom, encompass them with thy care! May thy mercy shield their infant heads, and thy counsels guide their youthful steps! Fit them for their uncertain lot in this world; and in the higher or humbler stations they are destined to, may they live well, and do well! And when the hand of death shall have done away all distinctions, and the small and the great shall stand before God, in an equal line, may they find favour in thine eyes; and shine in higher honours than those which this world seems to deny them!

Accept

*Accept their benefactors in this work of faith,
and labour of love, shewn to thy name and theirs !
May what is thus lent unto the Lord, consecrate
what is retained for themselves ; and be found
again, after many days, both preserved, and in-
creased ; when all that has been devoted to vain or
forbidden objects, shall be lost, and lost for ever !*



PERSONI-

PERSONIFICATION
OF
WISDOM AND FOLLY:

A poetical Translation of the admired Fable of
PRODICUS; preserved by XENOPHON:

USUALLY CALLED
THE CHOICE OF HERCULES.

I.

NOW had the son of Jove, mature, attained
The joyful prime: when youth elate and gay,
Steps into life: and follows unrestrained
Where passion leads, or prudence points the way.
In the pure mind, at those ambiguous years,
Or Vice, rank weed, first strikes her poisonous root;
Or haply virtue's opening bud appears
By just degrees; fair bloom of fairest fruit:
For, if on youth's untainted thought imprest,
The generous purpose still shall warm the manly breast.

II.

As on a day, reflecting on his age
For highest deeds now ripe, Alcides fought
Retirement: nurse of contemplation sage;
Step following step, and thought succeeding thought;
Musing, with steady pace the youth pursued
His walk: and lost in meditation strayed
Far in a lonely vale, with solitude
Conversing; while intent his mind surveyed
The dubious path of life: before him lay,
Here, virtue's rough ascent, there, pleasure's flowery way.

III. Much

III.

Much did the view divide his wavering mind :
Now, glowed his breast with generous thirst of fame;
Now, love of ease to softer thoughts inclined
His yeilding soul, and quenched the rising flame.
When, lo! far off two female forms he spies;
Direct to him their steps they seem to bear :
Both, large and tall, exceeding human size ;
Both, far exceeding human beauty fair,
Graceful, yet each with different grace they move ;
This, striking sacred awe, that, softer, winning love,

IV.

The first, in native dignity surpassed ;
Artless, and unadorned, she pleased the more :
Health, o'er her looks a genuine lustre cast ;
A vest more white than new fallen snow she wore.
August she trod, yet modest was her air ;
Serene her eye, yet darting heavenly fire.
Still she drew near, and nearer still more fair,
More mild appeared ; yet such as might inspire
Pleasure corrected with an awful fear ;
Majestically sweet, and amiably severe.

V.

The other dame seemed e'en of fairer hue ;
But bold her mien ; unguarded roved her eye :
And her flushed cheek confessed at nearer view
The borrowed blushes of an artful dye.
All soft and delicate, with airy swim
Lightly she danced along ; her robe betrayed
Thro' the clear texture every tender limb ;
Heightening the charms it only seemed to shade :
And as it flowed adown, so loose and thin,
Her stature shewed more tall, more snowy white her skin.

VI. Of

VI.

Oft with a fmile ſhe viewed herſelf aſkance ;
E'en on her ſhade a conſcious look ſhe threw :
Then all around her caſt a careleſs glance,
To mark what gazing eyes her beauty drew.
As they came near, before that other maid
Approaching decent, eagerly ſhe preſſed
With haſty ſtep: nor of repulſe afraid,
With freedom bland, the wondering youth addreſſed :
With winning fondneſs on his neck ſhe hung ;
Sweet as the honey-dew flow'd her enchanting tongue.

VII.

“ Dear Hercules ! whence this unkind delay ?
“ Dear youth, what doubts can thus diſtract thy mind ?
“ Securely follow where I lead the way ;
“ And range thro' wilds of pleaſures unconfined.
“ With me retire, from noiſe, and pain, and care ;
“ Embathed in bliſs, and wrapt in endleſs eaſe :
“ Rough is the road to fame, thro' blood and war ;
“ Smooth is my way, and all my paths are peace.
“ With me retire, from toils and perils free ;
“ Leave honour to the wretch ; pleaſures were made for thee.

VIII.

“ Then will I grant thee all thy foul's deſire :
“ All that may charm thine ear, or pleaſe thy ſight ;
“ All that thy thought can frame, or wiſh require,
“ To ſleep thy raviſhed ſenſes in delight.
“ The ſumptuous feaſt enhanced with muſick's ſound ;
“ Fittiſt to tune the melting ſoul to love :
“ Rich odours, breathing choiceſt ſweets around ;
“ The fragrant bower, cool fountains, ſhady grove :
“ Freſh flowers, to ſtrew thy couch, and crown thy head ;
“ Joy ſhall attend thy ſteps, and eaſe ſhall ſmooth thy bed.

I

IX. “ Theſe

IX.

“ These will I freely, constantly supply ;
“ Pleasures, nor earned with toil, nor mixed with woe ;
“ Far from thy rest repining want shall fly ;
“ Nor labour bathe in sweat thy careful brow.
“ Mature, the copious harvest shall be thine ;
“ Let the laborious hind subdue the soil :
“ Leave the rash soldier spoils of war to win ;
“ Won by the soldier, thou shalt share the spoil :
“ These softer cares my blest allies employ,
“ New pleasures to invent ; to wish, and to enjoy.”

X.

Her winning voice the youth attentive caught ;
He gazed impatient on the smiling maid ;
Still gazed, and listened, then her name besought :
“ My name, fair youth, is happiness, she said :
“ Well can my friends this envied truth maintain :
“ They share my bliss ; they best can speak my praise :
“ Tho’ slander call me sloth : detraction vain !
“ Heed not what slander, vain detractor says :
“ Slander, still prompt true merit to defame ;
“ To blot the brightest worth, and blast the fairest name.”

XI.

By this, arrived the fair majestic maid :
(She all the while, with the same modest pace,
Composed, advanced :) “ Know Hercules, she said,
“ With manly tone, thy birth of heavenly race ;
“ Thy tender age, that lov’d instruction’s voice,
“ Promised thee generous, patient, brave, and wise,
“ When manhood should confirm thy glorious choice :
“ Now expectation waits to see thee rise.
“ Rise, youth, exalt thyself and me ; approve
“ Thy high descent from heaven ; and dare be worthy Jove.”

XII. “ But,

XII.

- “ But, what truth prompts, my tongue shall not disguise ;
- “ The steep ascent must be with toil subdued :
- “ Watchings and cares must win the lofty prize
- “ Proposed by heaven ; true blifs, and real good.
- “ Honour rewards the brave and bold alone ;
- “ She spurns the timorous, indolent, and bas ;
- “ Danger and toil stand stern before her throne ;
- “ And guard, so Jove commands, the sacred place.
- “ Who seeks her, must the mighty cost sustain,
- “ And pay the price of fame, labour, and care, and pain.

XIII.

- “ Wouldst thou engage the Gods’ peculiar care ?
- “ O Hercules, the immortal powers adore !
- “ With a pure heart, with sacrifice, and prayer,
- “ Attend their altars and their aid implore.
- “ Or, wouldst thou gain thy country’s loud applause,
- “ Loved as her father, as her God adored ?
- “ Be thou the bold asserter of her cause ;
- “ Her voice in council, in the fight, her sword.
- “ In peace, in war, pursue thy country’s good :
- “ For her, bare thy bold breast, and pour thy generous blood.

XIV.

- “ Wouldst thou to quell the proud, and lift the oppress,
- “ In arts of war, and matchless strength excell ?
- “ First conquer thou thyself ; to ease, to rest,
- “ To each soft thought of pleasure bid farewell !
- “ The night alternate, due to sweet repose,
- “ In watches waste : in painful march, the day :
- “ Congealed, amidst the rigorous winter’s snows ;
- “ Scorched, by the summer’s thirst-inflaming ray.
- “ Thy hardened limbs shall boast superior might :
- “ Vigour shall brace thine arm, resistless in the fight.

XV. “ Hear’st

XV.

" Hear'st thou what monsters then thou must engage ;
 " What danger, gentle youth, she bids thee prove ?"
 Abrupt, says sloth, " Ill fit thy tender age
 " Tumult and wars ; fit age for tender love.
 " Turn, gentle youth, to me, to love, and joy !
 " To these I lead : no monsters here shall stay
 " Thine easy course : no cares thy peace annoy :
 " I lead to bliss, a nearer, surer way.
 " Short is my way ; fair, easy, smooth, and plain :
 " Turn, gentle youth, with me, eternal pleasures reign."

XVI.

" What pleasures, vain, mistaken, wretch, are thine !
 " Virtue, with scorn replied ; who sleep'st in ease
 " Infensate ; whose soft limbs the toil decline
 " That seasons bliss, and makes enjoyment please.
 " Draining the copious bowl ere thirst require ;
 " Feasting, ere hunger to the feast invite :
 " Whose tasteless joys anticipate desire ;
 " Whom luxury supplies with appetite.
 " Yet nature loaths ; and you employ in vain
 " Variety, and art, to conquer her disdain.

XVII.

" The sparkling nectar, cooled with summer snows ;
 " The dainty board with choicest viands spread ;
 " To thee are tasteless all ; sincere repose
 " Flies from thy flow'ry couch, and downy bed.
 " For thou art only tired with indolence :
 " Nor is thy sleep with toil and labour bought ;
 " Th' imperfect sleep that lulls thy languid sense
 " In dull oblivious interval of thought :
 " That kindly steals the inactive hours away
 " From the long lingering space, that lengthens out the day.

XVIII. " From

XVIII.

- “ From bounteous nature’s unexhausted stores
“ Flows the pure fountain of sincere delight :
“ Averse to her, you waste the joyless hours ;
“ Sleep drowns thy days, and riot rules thy nights.
“ Immortal though thou art, indignant Jove
“ Hurl’d thee from heaven, th’ immortals blissful place ;
“ For ever banished from the realms above,
“ To dwell on earth, with man’s degenerate race ;
“ Fitter abode ! on earth alike disgraced ;
“ Rejected by the wise, and by the fool embraced.

XIX.

- “ Fond wretch ! that vainly weenest all delight
“ To gratify the sense, reserved for thee !
“ Yet the most pleasing object to the sight,
“ Thine own fair action never didst thou see.
“ Tho’ lulled with softest sounds thou liest along ;
“ Soft music, warbling voices, melting lays :
“ Ne’er didst thou hear, more sweet than sweetest song
“ Charming thy soul, thou ne’er didst hear thy praise !
“ No ! to thy revels let the fool repair :
“ To such go smooth thy speech, and spread thy tempting

XX.

[snare.

- “ Vast happiness enjoy thy gay allies !
“ A youth of follies, an old age of cares :
“ Young yet enervate, old yet never wise ;
“ Vice wastes their vigour, and their mind impairs.
“ Vain, idle, delicate, in thoughtless ease,
“ Reserving woes for age, their prime they spend ;
“ All wretched, hopeless, in the evil days,
“ With sorrow to the verge of life they tend.
“ Grieved with the present, of the past ashamed,
“ They live, and are despised ; they die, nor more are named.

XXI.

" But with the Gods, and godlike men I dwell ;
 " Me, his supreme delight, th' almighty fire
 " Regards well pleased : whatever works excell,
 " All, or divine, or human, I inspire.
 " Counsel with strength, and industry with art,
 " In union meet conjoined, with me reside :
 " My dictates arm, instruct and mend the heart ;
 " The surest policy, the wisest guide.
 " With me, true friendship dwells : she deigns to bind
 " Those generous souls alone, whom I before have joined.

XXII.

" Nor need my friends the various costly feast ;
 " Hunger to them th' effects of art supplies :
 " Labour prepares the weary limbs to rest ;
 " Sweet is their sleep : light, cheerful, strong they rise.
 " Thro' health, thro' joy, thro' pleasure and renown,
 " They tread my paths, and by a soft descent,
 " At length to age, all gently sinking down,
 " Look back with transport on a life well-spent ;
 " In which no hour flew unimproved away ;
 " In which some generous deed distinguished every day.

XXIII.

" And when the destined term at length complete
 " Their ashes rest in peace, eternal fame
 " Sounds wide their praises : triumphant over fate,
 " In sacred song, for ever lives their name.
 " This, Hercules, is happiness, obey
 " My voice, and live. Let thy celestial birth
 " Lift, and enlarge, thy thoughts ! behold the way
 " That leads to fame ! and raises thee from earth
 " Immortal ! lo, I guide thy steps ! arise,
 " Pursue the glorious path, and claim thy native sky."

XXIV. Her

XXIV.

Her words breathe fire celestial, and impart
New vigour to his soul, that sudden caught
The generous flame : with great intent his heart
Swells full ; and labours with exalted thought :
The mist of error from his eyes dispelled,
Through all her fraudulent arts in clearest light
Sloth in her native form he now beheld :
Unveiled she stood, confessed before his sight ;
False Syren ! all her vaunted charms that shone
So fresh, e'er while, and fair, now withered, pale, and gone.

XXV.

No more the rosy bloom in sweet disguise
Masks her dissembled looks : each borrowed grace
Leaves her wan cheek ; pale sickness clouds her eyes
Livid and sunk, and passions dim her face.
As when fair Iris has a while displayed
Her watry arch, with gaudy painture gay,
While yet we gaze, the glorious colours fade,
And from our wonder gently steal away :
Where shone the beauteous phantom e'er so bright,
Now lowers the low-hung cloud, all gloomy to the sight.

XXVI.

But virtue more engaging all the while
Disclosed new charms ; more lovely, more serene ;
Beaming sweet influence. A milder smile
Softened the terrors of her lofty mien.
“ Lead Goddess, I am thine, (transported cry'd
“ Alcides) O propitious power, thy way
“ Teach me ! possess my soul, be thou my guide !
“ From thee, O never, never let me stray ! ”
While ardent thus the youth his vows address'd,
With all the Goddess filled, already glowed his breast.

XXVII. The

XXVII.

The heavenly maid with strength divine endued
 His daring soul; there, all her powers combined:
 Firm constancy, undaunted fortitude,
 Enduring patience, armed his mighty mind.
 Unmoved in toils, in dangers undismayed,
 By many a hardy deed, and bold emprise,
 From fiercest monsters, through her powerful aid,
 He freed the earth: through her, he gain'd the skies.
 'Twas virtue placed him in the blest abode;
 Crowned with eternal youth; among the Gods a God.



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